

Millstone Township Agricultural Advisory Council

Meeting Minutes

May 4, 2015

Mr. Asprocolas called the meeting to order at 7:38 PM.

The Secretary read the adequate notice.

Roll Call

Present: (3) Asprocolas, Butch, Posten

Absent: (3) Dancer, Peck, Pinhas

Public Comment: No public in attendance.

Approval of Minutes

A Motion was made by Ms. Butch with a Second offered by Mr. Asprocolas to approve the January 12, 2015, minutes.

AYES: (3) Butch, Asprocolas, Posten

NAYS: (0)

ABSTAIN: (0)

Correspondence: No correspondence was presented.

Old Business

- **Large Animal OEM Plan:** No report. It was noted that supplies have been received and are being stored in the meeting room.
- **Farm Leases:** Council members discussed the Perrineville Road farm lease and questioned item 5-v under Specifications and what the consequence would be if the lessee did not plant a cover crop during the final year of the lease term. Council members also discussed item 8a under the General Conditions and Instructions to Bidders which relates to Affirmative Action and Americans with Disability Act regulations. Per the Township Administrator, this item is in all of the Township's contracts. Ms Butch will contact the Farm Bureau to determine if this item is applicable to agriculture. The Farm lease bid was advertised in the April 30th edition of the Asbury Park Press and will be advertised a second time in the May 7th edition of the Asbury Park Press. The Secretary will send a notification out to members of the Ag Council's email contact list regarding the bid package. Council members discussed reviewing bid packages to ensure farmers understand and properly submit the required documentation.
- **Baird Homestead Project:** No report provided.
- **Farmland Preservation Process:** The Farmland Preservation Process document needs to be updated to include the Ag Council's responsibilities in the process. Ms. Butch suggested inserting the language from the State legislation that was revised in the 2008 - 2009 time frame. The legislation requires the Ag Council to do certain steps and requires the Ag Advisory Council Chair to sign off on the Affidavit of Verification. Council members discussed the Open Space and Farmland Preservation Council's responsibilities and involvement in the farmland preservation process. Ms. Butch explained that the legislation talks about Ag Advisory Boards being comprised of farmers and that the Open Space and Farmland Preservation Council was created and named prior to the 2008/2009 legislation change. Mr. Asprocolas explained that the OSFP Council was perturbed

because they had been involved in the current farmland application process and the item had been dropped from the OSFP Council's agenda. Ms. Butch suggested reviewing the legislation and Affidavit of Verification at the next Ag Council meeting to re-read the information and insert appropriate language in the farmland preservation process document. The updated farmland preservation process document will need to be approved by both the Ag and OSFP Councils as well as the Township Committee and possibly the SADC.

- **Newsletter:** No discussion.
- **Open Space Trust Activity Report:** The 2015 report for the period January through March was distributed for Council review. Mr. Asprocolas asked if there were any questions regarding the report. No questions were presented and there was no discussion of the trust account activity.

Pending Legislation

- **Horse Keeping Businesses and New Jersey Sales and Use Tax:** Ms. Butch reported that this bill is now being looked at again and may make it out of committee.
- **Soil Disturbance / SADC Regulations:** Ms. Butch discussed the soil disturbance resolution that was adopted at this year's State Agriculture Convention. All preserved farms would have strict limits on the amount of soil that could be disturbed which would heavily impact various operations particularly greenhouse, sod and horse farms. A subcommittee of the State Board of Agriculture, comprised of members from various industries and organizations, was created to review the issue and determined that the soil disturbance regulations were so restrictive that farmers no longer had a positive business climate. The subcommittee also determined that the deed of easement is a contract which severs specific rights from the land, not agricultural rights; the severance of rights is complete at the time of execution of the deed of easement and the SADC may not unilaterally change the nature of the rights severed after the fact even if it could be seen as beneficial to the SADC's farmland preservation program. The draft soil disturbance regulations prevent the viability of farming which could make it difficult for farmers to stay in business and would negatively impact the future of the state's farmland preservation program. The SADC should encourage practices to preserve soils however, farming operations and soils vary from farm to farm and a single standard will not always work on every farm throughout the state. The proposed soil disturbance rule has been withdrawn and the subcommittee prepared a list of guiding principles related to soil disturbance which will be presented to the SADC. Upon review, the SADC may accept the recommendations of the subcommittee or may make a counter proposal. There was also talk of keeping the subcommittee in place to review future legislative proposals from SADC.

New Business

- **Farmland Preservation Update:** Ms. Butch provided an update on the Kaut farmland preservation. The Ordinance authorizing the purchase of the development rights was adopted at the April 1st Township Committee meeting; the application then went to the Monmouth County Agriculture Development Board where approval was granted; the County Board of Freeholders adopted a resolution at their April 23rd meeting authorizing cost sharing of the purchase of the development easement. The application is now with the SADC and should be on the agenda for their meeting this month. Once the application is approved by the SADC, the Township will have permission to hire a surveyor.

- **Clambake:** The annual Clambake fundraiser will be held on Sunday, June 7th, from 1:00 pm to 5:30 PM at Wagner Farm Park. The flyer and sponsor letter were distributed for Council review. \$4,500 in sponsorships have been received to date.
- **Millstone Day:** Millstone Day will be held on Sunday, September 13th, at Frogbridge Day Camp. Ms. Butch submitted paperwork on behalf of the Friends group and the Friends, in coordination with the Historic Commission, will be hosting a food booth and activities for children. Pat offered to incorporate the Ag Council as part of the booth. Council members agreed to take part in the booth. Ms. Posten offered assistance with the Millstone Day activities. Mr. Asprocolas will not be able to attend but offered to help provide whatever is needed. Ms. Butch will submit the necessary paperwork on behalf of the Ag Council.
- **Hazelnut Twilight Meeting:** The meeting will be held on Thursday, August 13th, in New Brunswick. Ms. Butch is taking reservations. At this point the meeting is only open to Monmouth County farmers; the cost is \$15 per person and includes a barbecue style dinner. There is a worldwide shortage of hazelnuts. The meeting will include discussions on production as well as harvesting and oil extracting demonstrations.
- **Wildlife Management on Farms Next to Parkland:** This topic emerged and the problem was identified after the Monmouth County Board of Agriculture (MCBoA) mailed questionnaires to farmers regarding the soil disturbance issue. Jim Truncer, Secretary-Director of the Monmouth County Board of Recreation Commissioners, attended an MCBoA meeting to address concerns from farmers who sustained crop damage on farms adjacent to county parkland. A wildlife committee was formed and will be meeting with Mr. Truncer again to discuss productive ways to help farmers with wildlife problems. Potential measures to be considered may include permitting farmers to drive deer out of the park for culling and financing deer fencing for farms adjacent to parkland. This is not just a county park issue but a regional issue. This week's Farm Bureau newsletter contained an article on legislation that would permit commercial deer hunting in New Jersey.

At 8:49 PM, having no further business to discuss, a Motion was made by Ms. Posten with a Second offered by Ms. Butch to adjourn and by unanimous vote the meeting adjourned at 8:49 PM.

Respectfully Submitted,

Lorraine Maher
Council Secretary